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HINDOO SERPENT-CHARMERS.

THE INDIAN NABOB:

OR, A HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

CHAPTER XXXI.—ROYAL LODGINGS.

HASTILY that night, and with greater deliberation on the following day, we made a survey of our No. 330, 1858.

palace. Like all Indian residences of any pretensions, it was a large building, and had a multitude of rooms. It was built in the form of a quadrangle, having a central court; and attached to it were stables and other buildings, sufficiently capa-

cious to accommodate our train of elephants, camels, horses, and bullocks, with their drivers and attendants; while the palace itself was amply sufficient for ourselves, our personal servants, and our guards. It was, moreover, seated in a large park, which promised us space enough for exercise.

This was so far satisfactory; but, on the other hand, our caravanserai was woefully dilapidated, as we soon found by experience, when the autumnal rains commenced, and our only accommodations were those we had used under our tents; for we had been put into possession of what proved to be unfurnished lodgings. The palace, in fact, had been built when the empire was in a state of prosperity, as a summer-house for the emperor (probably Aurengzebe); but it had participated in the empire's decline.

Such, Archie, was our residence while we remained at Delhi—I had nearly written, "our prison-house"—for when our egress was not prevented by the violent rains, which almost immediately succeeded our arrival, our movements were not only watched with jealous suspicion, but circumscribed by command of the emperor, who probably feared our opening treacherous communications with his enemies.

"It was thoughtful of our friend the Great Mogul to provide us even with such indifferent quarters as these," said I, a few mornings after our arrival, as I stood watching the torrents of rain which not only deluged our paved court, but splashed all around us through the broken roof of our palace.

"Very," replied Mr. Dalzell, with a smile of dubious import. "For instance: if we had remained in our tents, you know, Hector, he would have made nothing out of us in the way of profit; for he could scarcely have charged us with ground-rent. So, as you say, it was very thoughtful—for himself."

"Water-rent, you mean, sir," said I, lugubriously enough, if I spoke as I felt; "but surely a great man like the Emperor of Delhi will not make us pay rent for being his guests!"

"Rent! true—no; they call it by another name here."

"I understand, sir—nuzzah," said I.

"Exactly—nuzzah," echoed my patron. "It is to be hoped," he added, "that the prospect of such profitable guests will not retard the business of our mission."

From the depth of my heart I responded to this wish, Archie; for anxious thoughts about Zillah pressed heavily upon me.

Mr. Dalzell. But we need not be idle, Hector, although the emperor has banished us to this pleasant retirement, and the skies forbid our stepping over its threshold. There will be no hunting or shooting to-day, nor for many days.

Hector (looking somewhat mournfully at his gun). No, sir.

Mr. Dalzell. We will find other kind of game. Here is a pamphlet I picked up when I was last in England. I bought it to amuse myself on the voyage; and I have brought it here to compare descriptions. Will you see what you can make of it, Hector?"

Hector (opening the "pamphlet"—otherwise a

tolerably thick volume). It is a French book, I see, sir.

Mr. Dalzell (smiling). Is there any difficulty in that, Hector?

Hector. Not very much. I believe I can translate with tolerable ease.

The fact is, Archie, I had been for some time learning French, to please Zillah, who loved—too well, perhaps—her mother's native language; and her approbation had spurred me on to diligence, and made the task light and pleasant.

Mr. Dalzell. I fancied so. Well, there are parts in this pamphlet (*pamphlet! thought I, weighing the book in my hand*) which will be useful to me if put into fair English. You will see that I have marked them in the margin; and there are others which will be useful to you, and amusing as well. You can find these for yourself. Among other matters, there is a description of this same city of Delhi, which, it seems, we are not yet to enter. We will see what truth there is in the Frenchman's report.

I took the book, and commenced the work; and as one result of it, I am enabled to give you the following account of the Mahomedan capital.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DESCRIPTION OF DELHI.

"I KNOW," writes my mercurial Frenchman, the author, "that one of the first questions you will ask me will be, What similitude this city of Delhi beareth to Paris? Now, as to its beauty: I have often wondered to hear Europeans despising the towns of the Indies, in not coming near ours in respect of buildings. Certainly, if Paris or London stood in the place of Delhi, the greatest parts of them must come down, to be builded after another fashion. Our cities, indeed, have great beauties and embellishments, but they are such as are proper to them and their colder climate; whereas Delhi hath advantages suited to its climate; for you must know that the heat here obligeth all, even the great lords and the emperor himself, to go without stockings—in a kind of slippers only—a fine and light turban on their heads, and every other vestment accordingly; also, that there are months in the summer so excessively hot, that in the rooms one can scarcely hold one's hands against the walls, nor one's head on a cushion; and that the people are obliged to lie at the door of their chambers, as the rabble also do in the open streets, or as the merchants and other people of some quality do—in some open hall or garden, or upon some terrace. Thence you may judge whether, if there were such streets as that of St. Jacques or St. Denis, with their houses shut, and of so many stories high, they would be habitable!

"And who is there, I pray, that would have a mind in summer, when he returns on horseback from the city, half dead in a manner, and stifled with heat and dust, to go climbing up a high and steep pair of stairs, to a fourth or fifth story, and to abide in the hot and suffocating air? At such times they desire only to throw into the stomach a pint of fresh water or lemonade, to wash the face and hands and feet, to lie down in some cool and shady place, having a servant or two to fan them by turns with their great punkahs. But,

leaving this, I shall endeavour to entertain you with the representation of Delhi as it is, that so you may judge whether or not it be a fair city.

Delhi, then, is a town altogether new, seated on a plain upon a river like our Loire, called Gemna or Jumna, and built on one side of the river only, there being but one bridge, and that of boats, for passing from side to side. The town is surrounded with walls, except on the river side. These walls are of brick, having round towers, after the old fashion, distant from each other about a hundred paces, and a rampart behind. The compass of these walls, together with the fortress, is not so great as is commonly thought. I have gone round it with ease in three hours.

"The fortress, in which is the mehale or seraglio and the other royal apartments, is built near upon the river; yet is there, between the water and the walls, a large and long strand, whereupon elephants are exercised, and where the soldiery of the omrahs and rajahs is mustered in the emperor's presence, who looketh the while out of the windows of one of his apartments. The walls of the fortress, as to their round antique towers, are very near like those of the town; but they are partly of brick and partly of a certain red stone resembling marble, which giveth them a fairer appearance, besides that they are much higher and stouter, and encompassed also, excepting that side which overlooks the river, with a broad ditch, walled up with freestone, and full of water, and much fish swimming therein.

"Round about the ditch is a pretty large garden, at all times full of flowers, which, together with these great walls—all red—maketh a very fine sight. About this garden is the great street, or rather the great place-royal, to which the two great and principal gates do answer, and to these gates, the two chief streets of the city. In this great place it is where, at the break of day, are exercised the horses of a long royal stable, near it.

"This same place is also a kind of bazaar or market, of innumerable things sold there, and a gathering-place for players and jugglers of all sorts. It is no less the meeting-place of the poor astrologers, as well Mahomedan as Hindoo. These doctors, as forsooth I must call them, sit there in the sun upon a piece of tapestry, all covered with dust, having before them some old mathematical instruments, which they make show of to draw customers, and a great book open, representing the signs of the zodiac. These men are the oracles of the people, who, on payment of one pice—a half-penny—pretend to determine, by a show of learning and calculation, the fortunate moment when a business is to be begun, so as to insure success. The mean women, wrapped in white sheets from head to foot, come to find them out, telling them whisperingly their most secret concerns, as if they were their confessors, and (which proves their stupidity and folly) entreat them to make the stars propitious, as if they could regulate their influences. I here speak only of the pitiful astrologers of the bazaar; for there are others that are in the courts of the grandees, all Asia being over-spread with this superstition. The kings and great lords, who would not undertake the least thing without consulting them, allow them great salaries, that they may read to them what is writ-

ten in the heavens, and take out the fortunate moment, or find out, at the opening by hap-hazard of the Koran, the decision of their doubts.

"To return: these two principal streets are twenty-five or thirty paces in breadth, and run in a straight line as far as you are able to see; yet that which leads to the gate of Lahore is much longer than the other, but they are both alike as to the houses, which are built on this wise. On both sides of the street are nothing but arches, as in our Place Royal, yet with this difference, that there is not any building upon them, but only a terrace; also that they are not continued galleries. These arches are seved by rails, thus making shops, where tradesmen work in the day, where bankers sit for their business, and where merchants set out their wares, which at night they lock up in a magazine, the little door of which is at the end of the archway.

"It is upon this magazine that the houses of merchants are built and raised, which make a good show enough towards the street, and are also convenient, as being well aired, out of the way of dust, and having for their floor the terraces of the arches, upon which they can walk, and also where they can sleep at night.

"Besides these two principal streets are five others, which indeed are not so long nor so straight, but, for the rest, are altogether like them. There are also a great many other streets crossing these on all sides, whereof are also some furnished with arches; but because they have been built at various times, and by those who have not observed the symmetry that was requisite, they are, for the most part, neither so large nor so straight nor so well built as the others.

"Amongst all these streets are everywhere scattered the houses of the mansebdars or little omrahs, and those of the men of the law, as also of many great merchants and other private men, of which there are a good number that are passable. It is true that many of them are made all of earth only, and thatched; but for all that they are convenient, being generally airy, and furnished with courts and gardens. Nor are they disagreeable within, forasmuch as, besides the fine furniture, these thatched coverings are supported by a layer of strong canes, that are hard and strong and very pretty, and because also these earthen walls are plastered over with very fine white chalk.

"There is also a prodigious number of other small houses, that are only made up of earth and straw. It is from these thatched houses that Delhi is so subject to fires; and it is upon account of these pitiful houses of earth and straw, that I look upon Delhi no otherwise than as many villages joined together, or as the camp of an army, a little better and more commodiously placed than in the field.

"Touching the things within the fortress, where are the seraglio and other royal edifices, I find nothing remarkable at the entry but two great elephants of stone, which are on the two sides of one of the gates. These two great elephants, with the two resolute men sitting on them, do, at the first entry into this fortress, make an impression of I know not what greatness and awful terror.

"After you have passed this gate, you find a long and large street, divided into two by a chan-

nel of running water, and having on both sides a long raised wall, five or six feet high and four broad; and further off some arches shut, that follow one another all along, in the form of gates. It is upon this long raised place that clerks, comptrollers, and other small officers, sit to do their office, without being incommoded by the horses and people that do pass underneath.

"If you enter at the other gate, you find presently a pretty long and large street, or properly a bazaar. Besides these two streets are many other small ones on the right and left hand, leading to the apartments where the omrahs keep their guard. There are also many raised walks and tents in sundry places, that are the offices of several officers. Besides, there are many great halls, which are the kar-kanahs, or places where the handicraft-men of the palace do work. In one of these halls you shall find embroiderers, together with their chief who inspects them; in another, you shall find goldsmiths; in a third, picture-drawers; in a fourth, workmen in lacca; in others, joiners, turners, tailors, shoemakers; in others, workmen in silk and purified gold, and in all those sorts of fine cloth whereof they make turbans, and girdles with golden flowers. All these craftsmen come in the morning to the kar-kanahs, and work there all the day long, and at night return to their several homes, every one passing his life quietly without aspiring above his condition.

After all these apartments, we come at length to the Am-Kas, which is something very royal. This is a great square court. Over the great gate, which is in the middle of one of the sides of the square, there is a large raised space, all open, which is called Nagar-Kanah, because that is the place where the trumpets are, or rather the haut-boys and timbals, that play together in concert at certain hours of the day and night; but this is a very odd concert to the ears of a European.

"Over against the great gate of the court there is a great and stately hall, with many ranks of gilded pillars, open on three sides, looking towards the court. In the midst of the wall which divideth this hall from the seraglio, is a kind of great window, high and large, where the emperor appeareth, seated on his throne, having his sons on his side, and also slaves standing, some of whom drive away the flies with peacocks' feathers; others fan him with great fans; others standing ready with great respect and humility for several services. Thence he seeth beneath him all the omrahs, rajahs, and ambassadors, who are also all of them standing upon a raised ground encompassed with silver rails, with their eyes bent to the ground, and their hands crossing their breasts. For there it is that the emperor every day at noon giveth audience, which is the reason that this great hall is called Am-Kas.

"During the time this audience lasteth, the emperor is diverted by seeing pass before him a certain number of the handsoest horses of his stables. So he doth also see a good number of elephants passing before him, well washed and cleansed and painted black like ink, only that they have two great streaks of red painted from the top of their heads down to their trunks, where they meet. These great colosses, as though proud of being bravely adorned and attended, march with

great gravity, and when they are come before the emperor they bow the knee, and lift up their trunk, and make a noise, which passeth for a tassim, or deep salute.

"After these elephants, are brought divers tame gazelles, which are made to fight one with another, as also nylghaus and rhinoceroses, and great buffaloes of Bengal, with their prodigious horns, to combat with tigers; likewise leopards or panthers tamed, which he useth in hunting.

"All that I have been relating to you of what is transacted in the Am-Kas, seemeth great and royal; but that which extremely offended me, is a kind of adulation too mean and flat, commonly heard in that place. For the emperor cannot say a word to any purpose, but he is presently exalted, and some of the first omrahs, lifting up their hands as if to receive some benediction from heaven, cry out, 'Karamat! Karamat!'—Wonderful! Wonderful! Neither is there any Mongolian but knoweth and glorieth in reciting this proverb: 'If the king saith at noon day, It is night; you are to say, Behold the moon and the stars!'

"This vice passeth even unto the people; and I cannot forbear imparting one little piece of flattery. A pundit Brahmin, or Hindoo doctor, whom I had taken to serve my Aga, at the entering into his service must needs make his panegyric; and after he had compared him to the greatest conquerors, and told him a hundred gross and impertinent flatteries, at length concluded thus: 'When you put your foot into the stirrup, my lord, and when you march on horseback, the earth trembleth under your feet, the eight elephants that hold it upon their heads not being able to support it.' I could not forbear laughing, though I strove to put on a serious countenance, saying to my Aga that then he would do well to go on horseback but seldom; whereupon he replied, with a constrained countenance, 'And it is therefore that I cause myself ordinarily to be carried in a palanquin.'—But no more of this."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE BAZAAR AT DELHI, AND INDIAN JUGGLERY.

I HAVE somewhat digressed from my personal narrative, Archie, in giving you a description of that famous city Delhi, by another hand. Yet methinks you will not be displeased at having had put before you a faithful picture, so far as words can give it, of a place so remarkable alike for its glories and its calamities, and which was so soon to receive another strange and fearful overthrow.* Though I commenced the task imposed upon me by my patron, in the above translation, with little zeal, yet I soon acquired a liking for the work, which lightened many cheerless days of confinement, and kept my mind from dwelling too much on dismal apprehensions. Having thus cleared my way, I return to my own history.†

* That of 1759 and 1760, by the Afghan chief Ahmed Abdallah, in the course of which the emperor Aulumgeer, referred to in these memoirs, was assassinated, and his body stripped and exposed on the strand of the Jumna to the indignities of the populace.

† We have taken the liberty of considerably curtailing the description before us, which, indeed, in the original, occupies nearly twenty quarto pages, closely printed. Nevertheless, the extracts given are interesting as being, we believe, a correct delineation, so far as it goes, of Delhi under the rule of the great Mogul emperors, as well as the most ancient

The weeks and months of the rainy season and the succeeding winter passed sluggishly away, our quiet occupations being only occasionally varied by short excursions into the surrounding country, or by somewhat more frequent audiences at the emperor's court, of which it is necessary only to say that they were both tedious and fruitless. It was on our return from one of these audiences, however, that an incident occurred which introduced to us a personage of some importance, and conducted me to a welcome change of scene and action.

It was a fine and bright day, early in spring, that, on our return from one of Aulungeer's noon-day levées, we passed through the wide and open space already described as forming a bazaar, and also a convenient place for the idle exhibition of jugglers and others, to amuse the populace. We were duly mounted, and attended by some few of our guards, and should have passed quietly on but for the presence of an amazing crowd, who were witnessing, as it seemed, some sight more than ordinarily attractive. We were thus, in a measure, compelled to remain, hemmed in, as it were, by the throng; and let me confess that ere long I was so wrapped up in that which I witnessed, that I had no desire to hurry my departure; and even my experienced and sedate friend, Mr. Dalzell, who usually looked upon such matters with impatience and contempt, manifested, as I thought, some degree of unusual interest.

"These men are no common cheats and jugglers, Hector," he said, as we found ourselves near the inner edge of a circle, gathered around a small party of athletic low-caste Hindoos, who were amusing the mixed multitude, and gathering to themselves no small gain, by feats of legerdemain and sleight-of-hand. "I have once before witnessed their performances elsewhere; and you will confess them to be right marvellous."

Marvellous, truly, were the performances I then witnessed, and frightful the apparent dangers to which these men voluntarily exposed themselves, in handling the most venomous and deadly snakes, nay, even suffering themselves to be bitten by them, and yet without harm; but of this I shall not speak. Neither need I describe to you, Archie, the many strange and wonderful instances of bodily strength and agility then put forth, nor the commoner deceptions which serve only to puzzle vulgar spectators; such as, among other things, the seeming growth of a fruit-tree in one short quarter of an hour, from the seed placed in a shallow pot of earth, to the gathering of fruit from its branches.*

description to which we have access. The traveller quoted is Bernier; and a full translation of his entire work is to be found in the Harleian Collection, now in the British Museum. The translation was also published in Pinkerton's Collection of Voyages and Travels, in 1811; and, apart from these, the writer knows not that it is to be met with.

* This trick, which is "a stock piece with Indian jugglers," is thus described by a modern eye-witness. "The juggler shows you a plain, round, sea-shore stone, which he places in an earthenware dish filled with earth, and then waters it and covers it with a cloth. After invoking those spirits by whose aid alone it is said such wonders can be wrought, he lifts the cloth, and you see a fresh green plant, just peeping out of the earth. He waters it again, again covers the vessel, again invokes the spirits, and after a minute or two he lifts the cloth, and you have a pretty tidy small mango tree before you. After another round of the same ceremonies, the tree is discovered to be well stocked with bright-coloured mangoes. The whole production of the fruit-tree from the stone occupied about a quarter of an hour."—Bruce's "Scenes and Sights in the East."

It was towards the close of this performance, however, that a scene was enacted which—inexperienced as I was—filled me first with positive agony, and afterwards with unbounded astonishment. But my sheet is already closely filled, and I must commence my next with the latter part of this show, and the subsequent adventure.

THE ROOK:

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

FROM ancient times even to the present date, the rook has been the "observed" of poets and naturalists, farmers and gamekeepers, and even of landed gentry, to whose manorial residence a rookery has ever been considered as an aristocratic appanage. But, observed as the rook has been, no bird has suffered more from misrepresentation. Not only have the uninstructed, but even learned naturalists, deemed it inimical to man's interests, and it has suffered accordingly. In this respect the rook is not singular, and it can hardly complain, when even human biography affords so many parallel instances of men living and dying under a cloud. Like men, however, the rook has not wanted advocates; and glad are we that the prejudices against it are vanishing away.

"Give a dog an ill name—and hang him," says a proverb—homely, but shrewd. Now, what right had the learned Gesner to stamp the rook with the farmer-aborred name of "Frugivora"—corn-devourer? and why should Linnæus perpetuate this implied slander by terming it "Frugilegus"—corn-gatherer? an epithet which it bears in all works on ornithology, even to the present time—

"A word of fear,
Unpleasing to a ploughman's ear."

"Benefactor" would have been more to the purpose, and more in accordance with truth. Be this as it may, the term "corn-gatherer" is absurd, and we abjure it.

Were we to attempt to enter into a defence of the rook against all comers, we should have work enough upon our hands. Suffice it to say, that in districts which have been depopulated of their sable tenantry, so greatly has the agriculturist suffered from the ravages of the grubs or larvae of the chaffer and other insects, which, unthinned in their numbers, have battened on his newly-sown wheat, that he has been induced to recolonize the district by encouraging the reassembling of the scattered survivors of the general onslaught. No doubt, in grubbing for the voracious larvae or caterpillars of the beetle tribe, the rook upturns good grain, though not to any great extent, for it knows where to probe with its powerful beak; no doubt, too, it disturbs the potato "sets" in spring, and perhaps it may now and then gobble up a few of the "cuttings;" nor can we quite absolve it from blame for the depredations it commits in cherry orchards, to the fruit of which it is particularly partial; moreover, it is said, and we believe with truth, to bury acorns and even walnuts in the earth, as provender for a time of scarcity; but, allowing all this to the uttermost, we still affirm that the rook, one of the most sagacious and intelligent of birds, confers by its

instinctive proceedings a substantial benefit on the farmer—a benefit far outweighing any trifling mischief resulting from its digging and upturning, its devouring a few potato “sets” in spring, or a few young tubers in autumn, or its occasional devastations in the cherry orchard.

It would seem as if the rook felt that it was legitimately worthy of man’s protection, for it congregates around his abode, and becomes a fellow labourer with the ploughman. It follows his track as he cuts the level surface of the field into long furrowed lines, and, clustering around him, almost within reach of his long whip, splits the clods with its beak, disengages the fibrous roots of grasses and weeds, and works industriously in its useful vocation. Thus engaged, a flock of rooks, with the ploughman and his team, and the furrowed field, and the distant mansion, screened by the adjacent rookery, combine to form a picture pleasing alike to the eye of the artist and the naturalist. How busy is the negro group! but they are not bondslaves; theirs is the soil; the Almighty Benefactor has given it to them as their natural heritage, and while their toil is for themselves, it benefits man. Who would disturb them—these birds of ancient lineage:—

“The sable tenants of five hundred years,
That on the high tops of yon ancient elms
Pour their hoarse music on the lonely ear?”

How glances, like burnished metal in the sun, their finely-polished plumage! how gracefully do they rise on the wing, and how tranquilly do they again settle on an untried spot, and commence their industrious operations! They are by no means jealous of intruders; a flock of starlings often mingles in their midst; nay, the gulls from the shore of the neighbouring estuary associate with them; and neither starlings nor gulls are molested. The land is open to all comers; none are regarded as poachers; they arrogate to themselves no “preserves;” they claim no prescriptive rights.

Yet the rooks, thus tranquilly feeding, are nevertheless by no means negligent of their own interests, or rather, perhaps, of their security. Sentinels are stationed on the look-out; sometimes on the top of an adjacent tree, and sometimes on a more elevated and prospect-giving portion of the field, especially if it be extensive and bounded by low-trimmed hedges. Often, too, does an individual bird mount into the air, sail round, taking an ample reconnoitring circuit, and then return—no doubt to give in his report. Often does a visitor arrive, as if to communicate some important news affecting the general weal, and by his tidings the flock are evidently influenced. Stealthy may be the movements of the ruthless gunner, but he has been watched, and, in spite of his wariness, the flock are on the alert. As among men, however, so among rooks, some are heedless, some inexperienced and self-confident; and accordingly, now and then, one falls a victim, and is suspended on a gibbet as a warning to its friends, and a testimony to the skill of the ill-judging “sportsman.”

From the difficulty which the gunner experiences in approaching these birds, while thus feeding in the fields, it has been ignorantly supposed that

they smell gunpowder from afar. The truth is, that they have learned by experience—and great is their experience—to distinguish a gun from a stick, and to appreciate the difference of action between the man who carries it and the man who leads “his team afield,” or saunters about the lanes and country bye-paths, intent upon other things than their molestation. Their eyes are keen, they are long-sighted, and their instincts are sharpened by constant exercise to the border-line of reason.

Reader, has it been your lot to become practically conversant with the doings of a rookery? Such has been our privilege, from our days of boyhood upwards. Three or four good rookeries are at the present moment within a very short distance of the tenement in which we now write, and the rooks are feeding in the pasture lands upon which we gaze from our window. Everybody knows what a rookery is: it is an aerial city, built among the topmost branches of a more or less extensive clump of tall trees, and generally close to the abode of man. The trees of the avenue, the trees round the old church, the village elms, nay, even the lingering relics of what was once a tall coppice or grove, now within the precincts of a town or city, but once suburban—London itself not excluded—present us with rookeries. Goldsmith wrote about the rookery in the Temple Gardens; and even now, at the corner of Wood Street, Cheapside, one or two rooks’ nests are yet tenanted; but of this hereafter. If there be an organ of *habitativeness*, or, in other words, an organ enforcing attachment to an old home—a clinging to an ancestral spot—a determination to remain till the last tree is felled, and even then, a disposition to occupy an adjacent tower or steeple, rather than leave ancestral haunts—if (we repeat) there be such an organ in the *cerebrum* of a bird, then is it greatly developed in that of the rook. The rook is a pertinacious adherent to its time-honoured locality, and its decision of character has made it respected.

At the time of writing, it is autumn, and the leaves are falling fast from the trees. Let us visit the rookery. How distinctly do the nests show among the topmost twigs of the towering trees, and how apparently insecure is their situation! One would think that the storm would blow them away, and scatter their fragments far and wide. Such destruction does indeed often occur, not only in the autumn, but also in spring, when scores of the unfledged young are precipitated to the ground and killed. Dire is the commotion! loud and clamorous are the agitated parents, dashing about in wild frenzy amidst the ruins of their city! Yet these scenes are less frequent than might be supposed; for the tree top gives to the wind, and sways to and fro, the nest tossing like a ship upon the billows of the tempestuous ocean. It is a wonder that the eggs do not roll overboard, or that the callow young are not pitched over the gunwale of the nest, even when the breeze is moderate. This accident occurs but rarely, for the female sits closely, and as her body fits the bowl of the nest, to which it is accommodated during the construction of the latter, she cannot be easily dislodged, unless the nest itself be torn to pieces.

How crowded are the nests on some trees! how

few on others! while on some, only one or two are to be discerned! The reason is as follows. The crowded trees, generally of antique date and noble growth, constitute the nucleus of the colony; they form the heart of the city, or it may be of two coeval and adjacent cities, belonging to one commingled population. Thence, we come to the outskirts, more or less thickly occupied, according to the increase of the community and the demand for more building room; next to the suburban villages, soon to become, in their turn, mere outskirts; till, at last, so extensive becomes the now vast city, as to necessitate the colonization of more distant trees. In due time these new colonies form independent communities, rivalling the old, and not unfrequently engaged in warfare against them. About two hundred nests are above our head. Now, allowing to each nest two adult birds and three young, we have a population of one thousand individuals. But this is not an extensive rookery;* at the same time, many are much smaller, containing from ten or twenty to fifty nests; these, however, scarcely merit the name of rookeries; they are mere petty hamlets and villages. The nests appear to be deserted, and not a rook is to be seen. But it is not so; the nests are only forsaken for a season, and will be repaired before winter merges into spring.

Let us now cross the fields, the fallow lands, and the glebe under the action of the ploughshare, and thence let us proceed, as best we may, to the estuary of the Thames. Reader, we are sketching from nature. Thousands of rooks, divided into legions and cohorts, here meet our eye: some of the fields are blackened, so densely do they cover the surface, and all are busy. They are disturbed; the mass rises with hoarse cries, and sails away to some more secure feeding ground. The report of a gun is heard; the commotion is general, near and far; the air is populous, and loud is the clamour; and easily can the querulous caw of the young birds of the year be distinguished from the rougher and deeper calls of their parents. But the report of the gun has not only alarmed the rooks, but other seekers for food also. A flock of lapwings sweeps by in haste, and several gulls are wheeling aloft, stemming the current of the breeze; while a flight of larks also skims past, soon to settle in the centre of the fallow land or turnip field.

As we proceed in our walk, we find that some of the negro flocks have again settled, but others are yet on the wing. One settled flock we closely pass; a few single birds from the mass rise, and uttering noises which we cannot understand, they settle again. There is now a low, confused blending of voices among the troop; they move to a little distance, some walking leisurely, and some skimming along on wing only a few feet above the ground. They seem as if engaged in consultation rather than in the search of food. We disturb them not, but pass on. We have gained the shores of the estuary. Numerous are the gulls overhead! how gracefully do they wheel aloft! how lightly do they sweep down to the roughened surface of the water! how gallantly do they stem the aerial

current! how easy are their evolutions! A flock of terns or sea-swallows darts along, skimming the crests of the waves; but where are the rooks? See! high above the gulls, a serried legion is crossing the broad river. Look at the low shore; there they are in rank and file, down to the water's edge; and there they are in cohorts on the oozy field, cut by intersecting drainage courses. There, too, are flocks of the ample-winged peewit, and clouds of starlings, and flights of larks, as well as other birds which we cannot here pause to enumerate. Truly, a stroll along the river from Gravesend to Cliffe, in autumn, will repay the trouble of a day's excursion. How busy are the rooks, advancing as the tide retires! The waves have thrown up their multifarious exuvie, and well do the sable tide-waiters ply their task. They throng the muddy banks, they are perpetually coming and going, and hundreds are spread over the adjacent marsh lands.

We notice these things the more particularly, inasmuch as they display a peculiarity of habit in the rook which does not and cannot appertain to the tenants of the inland portions of our island, remote from the seashore or from the mouth of a large river; and many persons who are well acquainted with the economy of an inland rookery, are perhaps not aware that these birds are at any time visitants to the coast.

AN UNSEASONABLE PASSAGE OF THE ALPS.

PART II.

16th May. *At an Auberge in the mountains
at Argentière.*

At five o'clock A.M., since it was sunshiny, we were aroused, and the guides came for us with two mules. We had not started more than half an hour when the rain began to fall, and then a thick mist came over the mountains, which changed to heavy snow. Everything, mountains, firs, chalets, mules and all, were covered with it, and we could proceed no further than a little auberge in the mountains, where we are now seated before a large pine-fire, the snow coming down fast without, and the temperature very low. The guides have stowed away the mules as well as they can. This is quite an adventure. Luckily I have been able to procure the little ink with which I write. Hitherto the road has been practicable, but the steep ascents commence here, and we are in doubt how we shall get through them.

As we came here this morning, we passed a long procession, in single file, of men and women, bearing crosses, banners, etc., such numbers of them that they must nearly have exhausted all the population of Chamouni, which is a very small quiet place. Before the auberge, which is a most horribly wretched hole, is erected a cross, and there is a Catholic chapel with the inscription, "*Populum pauperem saluum facies*," and two images gaudily painted, one of our Saviour, the other of the Virgin and child, in recesses in the wall. While I write this, Marianne is reading an English book we bought at Geneva. By-the-by, now I have time I may as well mention, what I ought to have told you before, that an inscription in the public walks

* The Rookery in Hampton Court Park is stated by Mr. Jesse to consist of about 750 nests, giving a population of 3750 individuals, young and old.

at Geneva pleased me. It ran as follows: "These walks being intended for the public use and enjoyment, the Administrative Council leaves them to the preservation of the citizens." This delicate piece of warning seemed to be attended to, for the promenades were well kept and beautiful. I shall now put this away in my carpet-bag, for it appears the storm is passing away.

Hotel de la Tour à Martigny, same evening, 9 o'clock, p.m.

Here we are at last, I am delighted and thankful to say, and have just had coffee. I shall have time to put a few words down as to our journey before going to bed. Soon after I had finished the above sentences, dated Argentière, the storm of snow, which had been exceedingly heavy, moderated, and the two guides came to tell us that we had better attempt the pass during the lull.

Now, had it not been for the horrible hole Argentière was, with small cabins, and the filthy auge, swarming with vermin; and had it not been for our distance from Chamouni, two hours' journey at least over bad roads; and had it not been for the expense of retaining mules and guides, we should have remained; as it was, we decided to brave the unknown dangers and proceed. It was found necessary to take another guide with us. This I remonstrated against, but at last fortunately yielded, as the other two guides insisted upon its necessity.

The hotel-keeper at Sallanches had told me, that after viewing Chamouni, my only way would be to return to the former place, as it would be impossible to force the Tête Noir pass at this season of the year, especially for Madame. This I put down, of course, to interested motives, and the guides strengthened my desire to go on, by their apparent ignorance of any difficulties that lay in our road. Two of these guides had made the ascent of Mont Blanc, one several times, once with Albert Smith, and they showed me their books of certificates. They were most obliging and entertaining fellows, all three: none of them spoke a word of English.

Well, it must have been past eight o'clock A. M. when we left Argentière, having been half poisoned there with the smoke in the wretched room, and the horrible wine which they furnished. Almost immediately we began to ascend (and every step was soon more and more difficult), by winding paths leading up the montets. The snow covered everything, and made the stones very slippery, so that the mules stumbled frequently on the edges of fearful precipices that, generally, I could hardly have looked over, but this morning I did not feel the least fear. After scrambling over water-courses, rocks, etc., we entirely left every vestige of a path, and proceeded almost perpendicularly up the mountain—so perpendicular indeed, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could retain my seat in my saddle, however much I bent forward, and Marianne had to be held carefully on hers by two guides.

On we went till we got so high that there was no living thing except ourselves in the wild solitude. Never did I so entirely realize the meaning of the words "inaccessible," and "desolation." The scene was indeed one worth a vast amount of fatigue to behold. For many miles, as far as the

eye could see, one undulating mass of unbroken snow was before us; the eternal snow, without even a tree, or a leaf, or a blade of grass, or the slightest sign of human being, save ourselves. It was nature in all its sublimity, without one trace of man. It was indeed a glorious sight, that vast, rolling wilderness of snow, before which the sky looked black and drear, charged with tempest, which soon came on with a furious wind, in torrents of sharp snow.

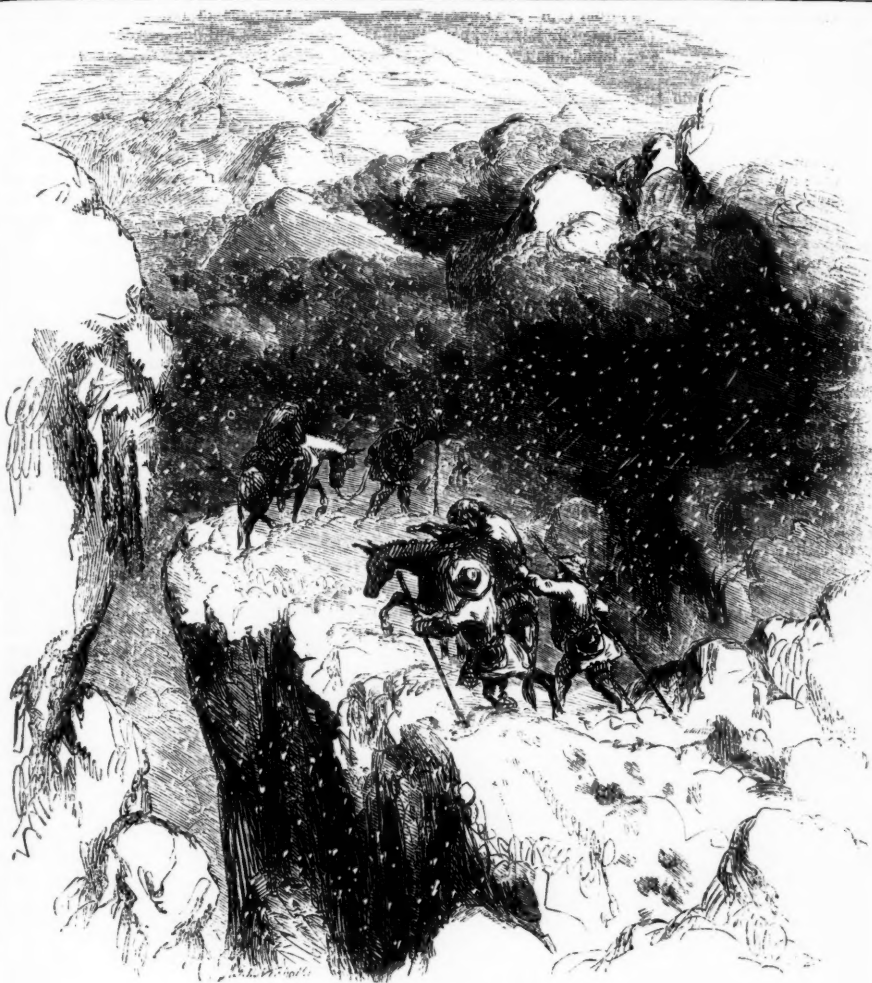
Fancy that stupendous Alpine chain, Marianne and myself and the three guides with our mules wandering about in the driving, drifting snow for hours, all trace of a path lost, the snow eight feet deep, and three times as deep in drifts; with crevasses here and there, and holes frequently eight or nine feet deep, with water at the bottom. No sound, except every now and then the fearful roar of the avalanches. It was a scene never to be forgotten, and indeed well worth going all the way from England to see.

Before long I became so intensely cold that I could scarcely feel I had thumbs or feet at all; but when the dangers became more imminent, and the mules would hardly go on, but stumbled every moment, and when they fell under us, and the guides as well as ourselves were up to their waists in snow; and when Marianne, who was exceedingly alarmed, was no less than three times pitched off her mule; then I began to be so warm that the extremities tingled again.

The storm beat with such force upon us, that with the greatest difficulty could we see our way. The Alpine ranges became covered with mist, and we were quite unable to proceed a step without sounding, for fear of some chasm which the snow had concealed. The fatigue was tremendous; the mules stumbled and fell continually, flinging us nearly off, in which case there was a chance of being suffocated in the snow. Several times I had to dismount and walk, as the snow would not bear the weight of both mule and rider; and the guides had very frequently to carry Marianne.

Once we were all obliged to halt, panting and exhausted, under the lee of an enormous barren rock coated with the snow. Marianne made up her mind we should never get down again. I fully expected myself that we must be many hours there, and was wondering how long we could bear the intense cold. The guides found the track many times, and as often lost it again. They stated that the mountain was closed, and only one traveller, an Englishman with guides, had been over it for seven months.

Before we reached the desert regions of eternal snow, we found all the chalets deserted, and where we were wandering, no human step had been for many months; the guides themselves afterwards acknowledged that they had been disconcerted. As for the poor mules, I shall have an affection for the race from this time forward; humanly speaking, they saved our lives, and how they could push through the fearful masses of snow I cannot imagine. Sitting on the mule's back, my own legs were frequently imbedded in the snow, and the mules were nearly buried in it. Once I fell off and went right in; it seemed to me like going under water, a most uncomfortable situation truly, and quite an unpleasant sensation. Still



FORCING THE PASSAGE OF THE ALPS, IN MAY.

in the midst of it all an unconquerable spirit of intense admiration continued, and I never felt a particle of fear. Sometimes I wondered what we should do if an avalanche detached itself from the ridges above us, (no unlikely thing at all,) but happily we were preserved from such a calamity.

After what seemed a very long time of this struggling in the storm and the snow, we began to descend again, but *such* descents! Marianne would have it that the mules frequently stood on their heads; and it was all I could do, throwing myself as far back as I could sit, to preserve my balance. We thought nothing at all, when we got a little further down, of putting the mules over immense heaps of stones, and, still later, over walls like those in Derbyshire.

It was very long ere any vestige at all of a road or human habitation was reached. I understood from the guides that a small *chalêt*, which used to serve as a land-mark on the highest part, had

either been buried in the snow, or consumed by fire, in which latter case it must have been struck by lightning: at all events, we could not find it.

When at last, few and far between, we began to see half-buried roads, many of them quite impassable in consequence of enormous avalanches lying across them, to avoid which we had to go carefully round—when we began to see something human—we were quite cheered.

You may fancy how cold, and wet, and hungry we all were, and how exhausted. Our passage down the mountain was a continued scene of excitement. All the country people crowded out to welcome us, delighted to see that we had forced the passage. Every one had some look of encouragement to give us, and some word of sympathy at the journey we must have had. "The mountain is open," was constantly repeated. "These people have actually come over it, they are from Chamouni this morning. Madame has been able

to pass with the mulets. Ah! quel esprit, ah! quel courage, ah! quel mauvais temps pour faire l'expédition." These were the exclamations every now and then.

The guides told me that no female had ever passed the mountain under such difficult circumstances, and very few travellers had ever dared it under such a storm, or when the snow was so dangerous; and they stated that they were astonished at our coolness and presence of mind. As for me, I do not understand it; in England, a little thing, at times, terrifies me, but here I have always felt as if nothing could even awaken a sensation of fear.

Oh that beautiful, white, pure snow, and the fresh, foaming, limpid water! I shall never forget the magnificent cascades and torrents of the Val d'Orsine, and Val Trient, and Col du Balme. In some parts it appears as if a tremendous earthquake had buried the mountains into fantastic towers and pinnacles, in a thousand marvellous confusions around.

From one ascent you look giddily down upon a plateau, which is but the commencement of another ravine, twice as deep and precipitous as the first. The road, very steep and narrow, winds all round the edges of these tremendous precipices; and close on the other side of the gorge rise perpendicular rocks, covered with firs and snow glaciers into the very clouds, nay, even above them. I feel it impossible to exaggerate this valley, which I was informed several times, by various parties, is the finest in all Switzerland. One of the most extraordinary views is obtained from the Hôtel du Tête Noir, where we arrived, wet and thoroughly fatigued, about two o'clock p.m., having sent on a guide to order a fire, etc. There we changed our dress and dried our clothes, and had a kind of dinner, which I was so very hungry as to enjoy exceedingly, though it was an impromptu affair, and not very well managed.

We had resolved, if quite done up, to stay the night at the Tête Noir; but after dinner, feeling refreshed, we decided to go on to Martigny by the fearful ascent of the Forclaz, since remaining with the mules and guides would have been exceedingly expensive. We were in our saddles again by three o'clock, and two hours after, once more in the eternal snow, after a tremendous ascent. But this time the road was child's play compared with the other, though still dangerous and very fatiguing. However, we arrived at Martigny at eight o'clock p.m.; and all down the Forclaz, by the route for the Great St. Bernard, and all the way into Martigny, the attention we excited was extraordinary. Every one was delighted to see us, and asked a thousand questions, inquiring from the guides and ourselves how we managed to get over the mountains.

It was quite true, as we learned at the Tête Noir also, that one traveller only had preceded us, the latter end of October last year; the country people had not been up at all, and their chalets were all deserted. The communication with the Tête Noir had been carried on from the Martigny side.

An old Swiss woman actually called me aside, and scolded me for bringing Madame over the mountain in such weather. "Voilà les voyageurs.

Voilà qu'ils ont passés la montagne," cried the people; "les premiers qui ont passés cette année." "Of what nation are they?" "Ah, ces sont des Anglais!"

Should the storm continue, our guides say, in answer to my inquiries as to what they are going to do, that they very much fear the return over the mountain will not be practicable to-morrow, and they will not be able to get back. It is a very fortunate thing that we did not remain at Argentières or Chamouni, and we have seen Alpine ranges under rather unusual circumstances. Marianne had a warm bath and some coffee at once, and went to bed directly, to sleep off the great fatigue; and now, having written thus far, I must soon go to bed too. Only think of our being nearly fourteen hours in the saddle, and in such weather too! I cannot understand how we managed to endure it. Our faces are quite sore with the intense cold, and our hands chapped where the gloves did not cover them.

This Martigny is a pretty little village, situated low down in a large plain, through which runs the river Rhone, and is the direct road to the Simplon. It is warm and pleasant here, though all around are the snowy peaks, which Marianne cannot now look at without shuddering. Indeed, neither of us had the least idea what an Alpine journey on mules was, at this unpropitious season of the year. The descent into Martigny, by the Forclaz, is most terrific. My passport was twice examined to-day. Well, I really am too tired to write any more. My eyes are quite painful with the glare of the snow; the pine-fire is dying on the hearth. The clock has struck eleven.

17th May, Thursday morning.

Awakened at six a.m., by the sweet chiming bells of Martigny, after having dreamt of the pinnacled forest of Aiguilles we had passed; glad and thankful to the Divine Protector to find ourselves in safety here, on a beautiful morning, embosomed amid those terrific hills in whose solitudes we had been wandering.

Your affectionate son.

E. C. M.

AN INCIDENT IN OUR HONEYMOON.

I do not know if any one else will think the story I am going to try to write down as interesting as we—that is, John and I—did. I will try to tell it in the simple words in which it was told to us. But, first, I must say that we heard it during our honeymoon, which we were spending at a cottage in the beautiful park of Lord —; I shall call him Dimdale. The cottage was situated in a wild and lonely part of it; and the deer used to come up close to the door, and lie under the fine old oaks, through whose branches the sun glimmered on the soft warm turf and clumps of young fern. And how the birds sang! for it was the beginning of May, and fine hot weather. But to come at once to the story.

In one of our walks, we had made acquaintance with the clergyman, Mr. Morton, an old man, with a placid sweet smile, and long snow-white hair, who somehow gave one the idea of perfect happiness and peace. He asked us to drink tea with him in his vicarage, to which we gladly agreed;

and he led us through paths in the forest, all bordered with primroses and bluebells, to a small house covered with creepers and in front having a garden as neat as you can imagine a garden to be, and full of old-fashioned flowers, such as crown imperials, starch hyacinths, and polyanthus, and sweet with southernwood, etc. On entering the house, I perceived that the parlour was full of children's toys and work-baskets, and I expected every moment that a whole flock of grandchildren would come rushing in; but none appeared.

I suppose Mr. Morton observed my surprise, for while we were at tea, before the open window, he said: "Mrs. Fairfield, I see you looking at those toys, and wondering what little children come here to enliven an old man's loneliness; but no child comes here. The little girl whose busy fingers last dressed that wooden baby, would have been an old woman now, and the merry boys who laughed and shouted at play with those horses, would have been elderly, careworn men. Yes, they were mine; and in one week they all left me."

I uttered some exclamation of pity, and he went on in a dreamy voice, as if more to himself than to us, looking from the window all the time:—

"Yes, thank you, my dear young lady. In one week, wife and children were taken, and I became the solitary man I have been ever since. . . . It was in a fever," he continued, after a pause—"a fever brought here by some wanderers, who came one night to a barn near the village, where one died, and from whom the infection spread. The weather was very bad for it—burning hot and very dry; there was no rain or dew, so that the flowers drooped and the leaves withered with the summer sun beating down all day long. There were deaths around me every day, and the bell was always tolling for the passing of a soul or a funeral. They brought the coffins that way"—and he pointed to a green path out of the forest—"in the evening, when one could hardly see them and their attendants against the dark green foliage, in the dusk."

"I went to the sick as much as possible; but I took every possible precaution against infection to my wife and children. We would have sent our darlings away, but we had no one to send them to, and we were a mile and a half away from any infected house. We had three children: Ellen, about eight years old, a thoughtful, quiet, loving little thing, older than her years. How she used to trot about the house after her mother, trying to help her, and looking up at her, with calm deep blue eyes. Then there were Hugh and Harry, rosy boisterous boys, and their mother—Ellen, Ellen. All that your bride can be to you, Mr. Fairfield, my wife was to me."

He was silent, and looked from the lattice window into the sweet spring evening, at the swallows darting about in the sunshine, the young green leaves and the flowers, whose scent floated through the open window, thinking of the dear companion who had once walked by his side in that sunshine, and tended those flowers with him.

"One evening," he went on, "I was at liberty, and we took the children out, letting the breeze,

what there was of it, blow from us to the village. We went to a hill, from whence we could see the silent village afar off. The boys ran about and shouted in their glee, but little Ellen came and laid her golden head on my knee, and looked in my face, with her deep sweet eyes. She said: 'Papa, there must be a great many people sorrowful down there in the village. I would like to help them. I wish we could comfort them. I should like so much.' I told her how we could help them, by asking Him who sends us all our troubles to help us to bear them patiently, knowing that they are sent in love and pity. Then we walked home, for the sun was setting like a red ball of fire. The children gathered great nosegays of roses and honeysuckles, which they put in water when we got home. The smell of a honeysuckle always brings that evening again before me.

"My darling laid her doll to sleep just as it lies now, and wished it and myself good night; the boys arranged all their playthings, and then their mother took them to bed, and I sat here, where I am now, looking into the darkening night. I heard them sing the evening hymn—Ellen and her mother, softly and clearly—the boys with loud, eager, joyous voices—and my heart was very thankful for the many blessings vouchsafed to me.

"That night there was a great cry in our house, as in Egypt of old, for our first-born was to die. The fever had begun. Our frightened servants ran from the house at midnight, and we were left alone with our stricken child. The morning dawned. The boys awoke, and we bid them dress themselves, and go and play in the forest. Meanwhile I went to Marston, the nearest town, for the doctor and a nurse, resolved, on their arrival, that I would take the boys away to the woodman's wife, Annice; I knew she would take care of them. But neither nurse nor doctor could be spared from Marston; and all that burning July day we watched by our darling's bed, listening to the distant sound of the boys at play in the forest, commingling with her ravings. Hardly ravings either, for there was nothing frightful; all was happiness and peace, as her young life had been. She talked of Harry and Hugh, of her birds and flowers, and of appearing in the presence of her dear Saviour.

"At last the long, dreadful day was wearing away. The sun was lowering, and we saw the struggle was nearly over. Those who had that fever rarely lived more than twenty-four hours, even the strong, much less one like our darling. About sunset I heard a voice under the window. It was Annice, who had heard of our trouble and had come to help us. I went down to speak to her, and she told me we were to part with our merry healthy boys. I had not dared to go near them all day; but we had heard their voices within an hour. But Annice had found them, and recognised the ghastly signs too well. I knew, too, as soon as I saw them. I went back to tell their mother, and we sent Annice to be with them, and stayed with the one from whom we were first to part.

"It was dark now, and the stars came out, and a red glow on the horizon showed where the moon was to rise by and by. Ellen was talking of walking as we had done last night. 'Papa, I am very

tired; do carry me home; we are coming very near home now, aren't we, very near home?" Then we were in church. You have seen how the sunset light shines on the monument to the Lady Dimdale, lighting up the sweet pure face that is raised to heaven? She thought she saw it. "It is growing dark; I want to see the glory on the monument. Ah! there it is; the head is all bright and shining. It is looking at me. I am coming. Such a glory is all around. I am coming. Wait till the hymn is sung, or papa and mamma will be vexed. And she raised herself, and stretched out her arms; and, as loud and sweet as last night she had sung in health and reason, she now sung the evening hymn:—

"Glory to thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light;
Keep me, O keep me—"

And so singing, the angel of Death, that had come so gently to her, took her home. We stood by her grave that night under the solemn stars, and, grief-stricken, thanked the chastening Father for the child he had given and taken away.

"But a great horror fell on me when we went back to our remaining dear ones. It was in bitter anguish that our little Harry left us. He was so strong and so healthy, that he struggled hard to live. He wanted to be out in the forest at play, he said, to feel the fresh air, and to cool his burning hands in the sparkling brook. No vision of glory calmed his last hour, and we were thankful when the end had come.

"Then Hugh woke up from the deadly stupor in which he had lain. He saw his brother lie still and quiet in his little crib; and when his mother took him on her lap, he said in his own sweet lisping voice: 'Harry is better now; I'll be better soon, mamma.'

"His mother told him Harry would never be ill any more, and never sorry; but, taken to his Saviour, would rest and be happy for evermore.

"I'll rest, too, till morning, mamma;" and so, clasping his little hands round her neck, he went to his eternal rest: and we were childless!

"After the little coffins had been laid by the first we had followed there, Ellen, my only Ellen, and I sat together on that seat in the twilight. Well do I remember the night. The air was heavy with the scent of hay and flowering bean-fields; bats wheeled round our heads, and great white moths and cockchafers flitted past us. We talked of our darlings, and how perhaps even then their angel spirits were near us; and we felt that it was well. We had laid them in the dark bosom of the earth for a time; but it would soon pass away—oh, very, very soon, and then how light the present bitterness!

"And, dear heart," I said to my beloved one, "we have still each other; we will not be desolate." And we felt peace in our hearts, even the peace of God, that the world cannot give. But the pestilence that walketh in darkness had not yet done its mission.

"My dearest," my wife said to me one day, "I am going to leave you too; you will then be alone, but do not let your heart break. A little while—a few years—and then we shall all meet together before the throne of the Lamb."

"I watched one day by my wife's dying bed, with Annice, and I remember no more. A long frightful dream, a deep stupor, succeeded. When I awoke it was evening, and the golden sunshine was in my room. From the window I could see into the forest; I saw that rain had fallen, and the grass and leaves were green again. The lurid mist had cleared away, and the sky was soft and blue. All looked joyous and glad; but I knew there was no more earthly gladness for me: the blessed rain had fallen on the graves of all I loved, and the grass grew green upon them.

"I need not tell of all I suffered; it has long gone by. When I first came down here, from my chamber, all was as I had left it the night that sorrow first fell upon us. The very flowers, gathered by the little hands that were stilled for ever, were there, but dry and dead. I would not let anything be moved. So they have been for fifty years, and so they will be till I join those who left them there. And in the quiet evening I can see them unaltered before me. Ellen, my wife, with her quiet eyes and smile, in the wicker-work chair; and little Ellen deftly working by her side, with a sedate womanly look on her sweet face; and the boys at noisy play around them. And then I feel that I am alone. But He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, has helped me through all my lonely days.

"And now all I have to tell is told. Perhaps you wonder at my telling it. I could not have done it twenty, nor even ten years ago; but I am now an old man, eighty-five years of age, and it cannot be long ere the changes and chances of this mortal life are over for me. A long life have I had, and rest will be sweet after the burden and heat of the day. I never see the sunset light on the Lady Dimdale's sweet face, without thinking of the shining glory round that angelic head, that seemed to call my little Ellen home, and longing for the time when I too shall go home to her, and her gentle mother, and her two happy brothers."

And when Mr. Morton was silent, we rose up gently, and bade him good-night, and walked home through the quiet forest. The influence of his calm resigned spirit seemed to us to pervade all things; and I earnestly prayed that when our day, dark or sunshiny as it may be, is over, and the golden evening falls, that the wondrous peace which is his, may be ours also. John and I, as we walked along, talked seriously of our future life, and of the vast importance of possessing that faith in God and trust in the Saviour, which alone would fit us to endure with calmness the shocks of earthly sorrow and trial. And the twilight fell gently around us as we came to the cottage door.

THE SKETCHER IN LONDON.

FROM BELGRAVIA TO BETHNAL GREEN.

STARTING from the region of Belgravia, we may consider ourselves on the top of the social scale. Belgravian houses are palaces; the fee-simple of some of them is five and twenty thousand pounds each, and they may be rented at from fifteen hundred to two thousand a year. They are the town abodes of the wealthy descendants of the feudal barons of ancient times, and also to them

some remnant of feudality yet clings; for they are as impervious as castles of the middle ages, even to classes far above the industrial; and each holds a swarm of retainers, distinguished not by bow and battle-axe and buff-jerkin, but by gold and silver livery, powdered hair, and unexceptionable calves. Around these strongholds, like satellites round a planet, cluster a large class, of a grade less exalted—the landed gentry and the squireocracy of the realm, whom the fashion of to-day dooms to the necessity of liquidating the greater part of their exchequer in London. They derive honour, and are willing to pay for it, from their contiguity to the magnates and grantees, whose society they assiduously court and to whose influence they are proud to succumb. There is a mystery to us plain folks in this intangible bond of union, which we cannot penetrate, and we pass on, leaving it unsolved. The cold stately grandeur of the quarter, where the silence is broken only by the tramp and clang of a gilded equipage, the thunderous volley of a knocker, that sets one's nerves a quivering, and the occasional footfall of a policeman, affords us nothing to speculate upon; we are out of our world; the place knows us not, never did know us, and never will, or we it. As Leigh Hunt's cobbler said, "What's the use o' walking in such fine places? let's turn down some back court."

So Belgravia is behind us, and we have found our way into that line of road which will bring us into Piccadilly very shortly. Welcome be the face of shops, those speculative eyes of Commerce, through which she flirts with the public, and exerts all manner of seductions to get possession of their cash. Here they are in goodly show—toy-shops, book-shops, provision-shops, doctors'-shops, dress-shops, and what not besides, mingled with private dwellings, professors' academies, and public offices, and all pleasantly confronted with visions of leafless trees and glimpses of green grass through the vistas opposite, until we are at no great distance from Hyde Park Corner. Here, with the commencement of Piccadilly, we are in the aristocratic quarter once more; but then it does not oppress one here; the greatness wears a more familiar face; if the reality is the same, the assumption is not; my lord's mansion shows a more modest face to the multitude; and if the house next door is an earl's, what does it signify? there is many a private lodging-house that cuts outwardly as good a figure. Then there are the omnibuses rattling along—the cabs dashing this way and that—the coster dares to lift up his voice—and the crowd which hurries along the pavement wears an air of independence, and looks up in the face with a magna-charta look that doesn't care a fig for the feudal times—not it.

Piccadilly has two aristocracies—an aristocracy of shopkeepers as well as of landholders. The shop-lords expand upon us as we proceed. They are not extravagant in the use of plate-glass and displays of gilding; they are not so much in need of that sort of thing, and can dispense with the heraldry of the puffing college. They get the best price for their wares that is got within the limits of the Great Babylon, and that they do need, for a very good reason—namely, that they have to give, on the average, three years' credit for all

they sell. Woe to the enterprising young tradesman who shall dare to settle in this latitude, if he have not the means of complying with this condition. Though his books may show him to be worth fifty shillings in the pound, his empty cash-box shall drive him into the Bankruptcy Court, and he shall pay for his ambition with his ruin. That much the practice of the fashionable world, in reference to matters of £ s. d., has decreed, and more's the pity, say we; and all honour to the exceptional few who, by their example, set their faces against such a custom!

The shop-lords of Piccadilly merge into the shop-commons long before we arrive at its eastern terminus. This quarter of the town has peculiar phenomena of its own, which demand some notice. There is a region, whose nucleus and focus is somewhere at this point, which—partaking of the industrial, the commercial, the professional, and the genteel—exhibits a combination of all four in constant, active, and frequent antagonism with each other. Hereabouts, in numerous by-streets, back streets, courts and avenues, are to be found the majority of that vast shoal of exiles and refugees from the Continent, who, making London their home and sanctuary, have to work for their bread, or to get it by some other means. French, Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Poles, and Russians here rub shoulders together and experiment upon the pockets of John Bull, in face of the wolf, which, alas! is too often howling at the door. They are professors of music, professors of fencing, professors of gymnastics and calisthenics, professors of philology and dialectics. They will teach you any language, from southern Armenian to northern Russ, and of every latitude between; they will teach you to perform on any instrument, from a Jew's-harp, which you may put in your mouth, to the double ophecleide, into whose mouth you may get yourself; and they will indoctrinate you in any system of philosophy, however strange or abstruse—and all for whatever you can afford to pay. Unhappily, not a few of them are gamblers, shufflers, and unmitigated rogues, ripe and ready for any species of fraud and wickedness, the pest of the neighbourhood, and the disgrace—as they are the plague—of their well-meaning but unfortunate compatriots.

Traversing one or two flagged passages, we find ourselves in Leicester Square, fronting the Great Globe. Here, truly, is matter enough for speculation. The memorials connected with this inclosure, were we to jot down all that crowd into remembrance, would fill the whole of this paper, and another to boot, and leave us at the end not half way on our eastward journey. These things, therefore, must stand over for another opportunity, if ever that should arrive. Meanwhile, we note that the square is a favourite standing-place for the penny hawking tribe, who, with a new and novel stock of merchandise, are busy in the prosecution of their craft, and vie with the shops, the rare-shows, curiosities, and exhibitions of wonders which, on the northern side, attract the crowds of sight-seers. The clamour of their cries is incessant, and the air resounds with exclamations of "Comic almanacks!" "air balloons!" "talking dolls!" "scaramouches!" "diaries for the new year!" "vulcanized heads!" besides the usual

quota of useful articles, all "at one penny each." Strange exotic figures walk up and down among the throng—long-cloaked, tawny-faced, shivering Orientals; shabby-looking, braid-coated Frenchmen; square-faced, light-haired, basin-hatted Germans; sleek-haired, fiery-eyed, bilious Italians; together with the fast-going tribe of the home breed; and among them all wanders mechanically that glazed-hatted letter of the alphabet, with his eyes wide open, and his unapparent vigilance on the alert.

By a rather sinuous course, through various unswept outlets, we are landed at length at the southern end of St. Martin's Lane, and thence into Trafalgar Square, where the voice of the Strand, like the rush of a falling cataract, salutes the ear. Along the Strand rolls the full tide of life; the reverberation of rapid wheels iterates incessantly; and the multitudinous sounds are blended in one sonorous roar, which never intermits. On either side of the way the continuous miles of shop-windows expose their fascinations to the million mob, of mingled ranks and classes, that walks and runs and strolls and lounges past. All that imagination can conceive, heart can desire, or the eye can feast upon, is here exhibited in prodigal and boundless profusion. This is one of the grand channels of London's huge commercial emporium—one of the busiest marts of the retail traffic. The dwellers here have a battle to fight, and all are combatants. Competition is the form of their antagonism, and the press, that manufacturing engine of puffs in every shape, is their principal weapon. Each is on the alert to keep himself in the foremost rank. To shrink into the rear is to be nothing—to sink, to fall, and, commercially speaking, to die. You read this in the shopkeeper's eye—you see it in his acts. It is the mainspring of his assiduous politeness, the basis of all his operations. A kindred feeling is expressed in the faces of the multitude that hurries up and down. They are, for the most part, combatants too. The majority are hastening either to buy in the cheapest market or to sell in the dearest, or to despatch the details of some transaction leading to one or both of these results. Commerce, in all its grades, crushes and grinds its way to this one end. It is the aim of all, from the millionaire to "the one-pennied boy;" and in the strife the weak and the struggling are a thousand times overthrown, that the wealthy and the strong may monopolise the triumph. But then the overthrown struggler rises again, with elastic force and persistent spirit, and dares and does and wins his way at last, and acquires wealth in his turn; or he fails and loses heart, and, weary with the strife, retires spirit-broken from the battlefield, to mourn over his defeat.

On through Temple Bar and Fleet Street, the same spectacle continues. On up Ludgate Hill, sombre beneath the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral, and commerce only deepens and intensifies as we approach its central focus. Shall we turn aside here, up that dingy Old Bailey, where at this moment an assassin is on trial for his life? Shall we pause to contemplate that cold stone sepulchre, where the guilty wretch is buried alive, and, listening to the ghastly litany that deems him dead, is hurried out to die before the gaze of con-

gregated thousands?—where three thousand of the sons and daughters of crime are annually immured, preparatory to the sentence of the law? No; that would be descending to the lowest depths of the social scale at once. Rather let us hasten forwards.

Here we are in Cheapside. All the channels of traffic seem to have converged into one in this spot, and all the splendour of shopkeeping and shop treasures to have culminated at this point. You can hardly move forwards for the multitudes that at every step baffle your attempts at progress, and you are hardly willing to move from the brilliant array of merchandise which on all sides challenges your admiration. The clatter and the din are equal to the crush and tumult; waggons, carts, cabs, and omnibuses literally choke the way, and momentarily more are endeavouring to force a passage in from the narrow tributaries that debouch into it on both sides. Here commerce is proud and independent; the retail and wholesale departments join hands and domicile together; the shops are surmounted by warehouses and offices, and backed by storehouses furlongs deep, and bursting with incalculable hoards of material wealth. It is the region at once of bales and packages, of warrants and invoices, of price currents and promissory notes; and of small change and smaller talk, and pretty little packets handed over the counter. Cheapside—Old Cheape—is the most ancient institution of shopkeeping London; but, long-enduring as its reputation has been, it is only now, after the lapse of six or seven centuries, arriving at the zenith of its glory.

But we must leave it behind us, and pass on. A wide open space, bounded by the Mansion House on one side, the Bank on another, the Royal Exchange on a third, and the world we have left behind us on the fourth, welcomes us to the great money mart, not of London and this country only, but of the whole habitable globe. Around the Bank, with its vaults of solid bullion and its representative paper, the whole financial machinery and monetary policy of the realm cluster and concentrate, as by a kind of magnetic attraction. Here is the pasture of the Bulls and Bears of the stock-market; here the merchants congregate on 'Change; here is Lloyd's, whose Briarean arms stretch across continents and comprehend Atlantics in their grasp. Here is Threadneedle Street and Capel Court, with their speculators; Cornhill, with its mines of gold, silver, and gems; and Lombard Street, with the millions of wealth which have made its name famous through the earth. It is dividend day at the Bank, and it is a busy day everywhere; and the broad area before us is alive with figures in rapid motion, and crossing it in every direction. The babble of tongues mingles with the din of wheels; hurrying clerks dart out of Lombard Street, or dive through the courts in Cornhill; portly, double-chinned magnates stalk majestically into the Exchange; dapper messengers bustle out; cabs rattle about; elegant broughams draw up at the side entrances; officials, in the city livery, are on the *qui vive*; and strong and vigorously beats the pulse of financial life, spite of the late financial panic, as we wander curiously amid the thronged scene.

Along through Cornhill and Leadenhall Street;

then into Aldgate; and by this addition to our progress we are let gradually down the slopes of the golden mountain into the level plain. Aldgate wears a common-place look enough; and we feel that we have made no ordinary descent in exchanging it for Cheapside and Cornhill. But as we advance, we are still going down in the social scale—so far, at least, as the outward and visible elements of what the world calls respectability are a test. And now we are in Whitechapel Road, where, turning northward down Brick Lane, we are landed in a very work-a-day district, which does not improve much as we proceed, and from which, after a few turns and windings, we find ourselves plunged in the squalor and dilapidation of Spitalfields. Look around you now, and you may learn what penury means. This is the antipodes of Belgravia, whence we set forth on our survey but a few hours ago. Look at that house, the house of the silk-weaver. The fee-simple of it would not half pay for the portico of the Belgravian palace—would hardly buy the carved door and bronzed knocker. Note the black oozy walls, the rotting wood-work, the skeleton windows that quake and gibber with every gush of wind. What a bleared and staring look their ugly width gives them! Behind that wide window is the loom of the weaver, who, while he has work, sits there the livelong day and half the night, plying the everlasting shuttle for a pittance that barely keeps soul and body together. But you do not hear the loom now; the weaver has no work; the money panic has struck his clacking loom with dumbness. That ragged, shivering girl, crouching on the steps of the door, is his eldest child; she has not broken her fast to-day; she is left to watch at home, while father and mother and three younger infants are gone away on a bread cruise, in some far region of city or suburb, to see what they can raise by moaning conjointly some lamentable ditty in the ears of the too-disdainful public. When they come back, the child will get a dole of broken food—if they have any to give her—and then the wretched family will huddle together on the bare floor, to court oblivion of their miseries in sleep. That, my friend, is what penury means; but it does not always mean that alone. It is not always that the weaver will beg even for bread for his starving little ones. You shall find another, if you choose to look for him, lying prostrate on the floor of his empty room, starving in a horizontal position, because, as he will tell you, the torture of an empty stomach is less painful in that posture than in any other. Weavers have been known to starve and die, not only because they would not beg in the streets, but because they would not claim the relief afforded by the parish.

What a combination of wreck and muck is this region of Spitalfields! what horrible odours insult the senses! what emaciated caricatures of humanity shock the sight! Oh! that is what penury means; it devours the muscles of manhood, it plucks the heart out of the breast, it starves and stunts the child, it dwarfs the parent, and it transfers a whole industrial army into a passive machine. So, at least, they say it has done in Spitalfields; and, alas! we see nothing here that is not confirmatory of the dictum.

Spitalfields melts into Bethnal Green, and there

poverty and penury look on us under another aspect. The crisis which stopped the looms has played sad havoc with builders and manufacturers of all kinds; and hosts of those stout hands and sturdy frames, whose natural heritage is the hardest and heaviest of the world's work, are suddenly left without that work to do. It may be that prudence and forethought were not their prominent virtues in the days of prosperity, and that much of the misery they experience is the result in part of their want of such qualities. That may be a fact to be regretted, but it should not alienate our sympathies from those who pay so heavily the penalty of their errors.

There is a good share of the Celtic element in the poorer portion of this population, who belong to a race which, however enduring, is not given to silence on the subject of its necessities; and the appeals for relief, of which we heard but little among the weavers, are here frequent and clamorous. The labourer waylays us at the corner, with the old story of his unbroken fast; his wife follows up his plaint, and dogs our footsteps that we may hear the whole tale. Here and there bands of men co-operating together roar in choral some rude rhyme, setting forth their distress; the inhabitants send out broken food to them, which they are seen to distribute and devour at once. Such are some of the social aspects that strike us; but what of the commercial? Here also we are near the bottom of the scale. A population, the mass of whom have no money, are a bugbear and a terror to the shopkeeper. The slop-shop is all but deserted, the tally-shop is at a stand-still, the pawn-shop alone is busy; while a doubtful and unsatisfactory traffic drags on at the "general shop," whose proprietor is the only capitalist bold enough to open an account with the penniless labouring class, and that he finds a ticklish affair indeed, requiring all the care and caution he can exercise. In times of dearth of employment, he is often as much a sufferer as the labourer himself, and can only escape ruin by hardening his heart against the entreaties of his famishing customers.

We have wandered away from the hives of Bethnal Green, while the day has been deepening into night, and we are now in Whitechapel Road, where it adjoins Mile End, amid the tumult of the main thoroughfare, where the ranks of flaring gas burners project horizontally from the open shop-fronts, and seem to canopy the footways with an awning of mingled fog and flame. The crowd augments as the night draws on. Bands of workmen returning home stroll along the pavement; they halt at the open stalls, and chaffer with the chapmen; they enter the gin-palace, and call for the fire-water, which is dispensed to them by a youthful maid, fair and delicate of features, and dazzling in silk, and gems, and snowy muslin, who smiles a smile of welcome. A vision of innocence and grace, she presides over the orgies of intoxication and prospective perdition. She is the drunkard's cup-bearer—the seductive Hebe installed by cupidity to bewitch the last coin from the poor man's pocket, and lure him to his own degradation and destitution. Around her the mad votaries of intemperance hold their insane revels; ruin riots in its rags and tatters; the wretchedness that courts oblivion finds it in drunken insensibility; the famished

mother is there with her famished babe, and parts with the coin she has begged, that she may forget her hunger and nakedness in the delirious gratification of unnatural thirst. The famished father is there, whose starving family are waiting his return with the proceeds of his day's mendicancy to assuage their cravings. The paid workman is there, spending the fruits of his industry, and he thinks it a kindness to treat his unemployed comrade with the maddening draught. Old and young of both sexes are all clamouring and quaffing together; and fierce words of wrath, of blasphemy, and of foul and disgusting import, are bandied about with an energy that is yet neither impulsive nor earnest—only mechanical and drunken. And all the while, that youthful syren, in spotless silk and glittering gems, smiles and nods with bland serenity—and sweeps the cash into the till.

But what is here? What are all this crowd of seeming outcasts waiting for at this dirty doorway of shattered planks? What is it? what can it be, but the Penny Gaff? These people are the waifs and strays of London streets; there are among them those who will work when they can get work, and there are beggars, hangers-on, street-sweepers, shoe-blacks, cadgers, pickpockets and petty thieves, and vagabonds of all descriptions. The winter night that has come down upon them offers to their view no home, no cheerful fireside, no welcoming faces of kindred, no comforting meal, no couch for refreshing repose. But the gaff offers to them an hour or two of shelter from the elements without, and an hour or two of exciting recreation within. That such recreation is for the most part worse than frivolous—that it is often intensely debasing and demoralising, and calculated to perpetuate and aggravate the degradation and misery of the class for whom it is prepared—is a fact too painfully proved; but it is one for which these outcasts care nothing; and they will spend their last penny in the refuge of the gaff, though they may have to crawl to the Refuge for the Destitute to save them from sleeping in the street.

So, while the lords and ladies of Belgravia are enshrined in their boxes at the opera, the waifs and strays of London's slums are clamouring on the rough benches of the Penny Gaff. In presence of this social antithesis, we are pretty near the bottom of the social scale, and we need not descend further. May what we have witnessed help us to a just sense of our obligations, and stir us up to do all that lies in our power for the amelioration of the condition of the erring and suffering poor.

THE DISCOURAGED SEEKER.

DISCOURAGED seeker, and unanswered suitor, Jesus calls thee. You have asked, and not received—you have sought, and not found—you have knocked, and the door has not been opened. Of whom have ye asked? Where have ye sought? At what door have ye knocked? You have knocked at the door of the church, it may be, and received no answer. You have sought for salvation in sacraments, and have not found it. You have asked of man for redemption, and asked in vain. Now Jesus saith, "Every one that asketh, receiveth; he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." Like the impotent man, you may say, I have no man to help me. But because

there is no man, is there no God? It is true, no man can help you. But rise; He who can help, calls you. Come away from despondency, on account of your own weakness. Come away from looking unto men for salvation, and look unto God in Christ; for Jesus calls thee. What men and churches and angels cannot effect, by any amount of labour or self-denial, Christ can accomplish by the word of his mouth.

Or it may be that you *have* asked of Christ, sought at the mercy-seat, and knocked at heaven's gate; and yet you have not received. Have you asked amiss? This may not be the cause of your disappointment. God keeps silence for a time to exercise your faith, and thereby to strengthen it. Still ask, still seek, still knock. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. The woman of Canaan was met first by cold silence, and then by what appeared a repulse. But to that woman Christ at length said, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." To every discouraged seeker we may say, "Rise, He calleth thee."—*From "Jesus Calls Thee." By Samuel Martin. Nisbet and Co.*

THE SCARLET BLOSSOM.

It is related by Charles John Anderson, in his account of explorations and discoveries in South-western Africa, that one morning, after he and his party had been travelling some time through a wild and sterile region, he discovered upon the top of a rock "a most beautiful air-plant, in full blossom, of a bright scarlet colour, with the lower part of the interior of the corolla tinged with lemon." What a lesson did this little plant whisper to the traveller's heart! and what lessons should all such displays of God's goodness whisper to us! Shall He, who so clothes the lilies and the wild flowers of the desert, forget us, who are of more value than they? Cannot He, who caused the barren rock to blossom, give us light in darkness and comfort in affliction? Christ says, "Consider the lilies of the field." Yes, whoso is wise and will consider these things, shall find, here and there along life's dreary waste, many a scarlet blossom smiling around him.—*American Messenger.*

TO MY PEN.

FRESH from the box, and in the holder set,
For work prepared, though all untarnish'd yet,
Thy turn at length has come; thy fate, no doubt,
Hard labour, till in service quite worn out;
Meanwhile, like all that have preceded thee,
An instrument of good or ill to be.
Though—wielded by so weak, unskill'd a hand—
But small the influence at thy command,
Thy owner would not this should be applied,
Except on Virtue's and Religion's side.
Shame on the guilty, base, disorder'd mind,
Who for thy race no higher use can find,
Than Goodness from her temple to entice,
And play the odious panders to vice!
For thee a better office he would ask,
And fain depute thee to a nobler task:
Heaven grant that thou mayest never be employ'd
To decorate a thought with guile alloy'd,
To make for aught pernicious a defence,
Or veil the loveliness of Innocence!
Be thine the effort, if the power deny'd,
To stem the force of Error's rushing tide,
Expose the majesty of Truth to view,
Reveal the beautiful form of Virtue too;
Denounce the evil, magnify the good,
And elevate the human brotherhood:
And oh! may he who guides thee dictate not
One line that, "dying, he might wish to blot!"

S. E.

Newbury.